TRANS REPORT

OCTOBER 2006

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

MBTA SEEKS FEEDBACK ON NEW VEHICLES
Page 2

ENVIRONMENTAL WORK PROCEEDING ON GREEN LINE EXTENSION
Page 3

MPO ACTIVITIES
Page 3

NEW STREET CONFIGURATIONS IN FINANCIAL DISTRICT
Page 4

MEETING CALENDAR

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting sites.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

October 11 (Wednesday)

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Freight Committee. *Boston Region MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150.* 1:00 PM

Regional Transportation Advisory Council. *Conference Room 4.* 3:00 PM

October 12 (Thursday)

Transportation Finance Commission. *MBTA Board Room, Third Floor*. 1:00 PM

October 19 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. *Conference Room 4.* 10:00 AM

Partners in Transportation National Disability Awareness Month Celebration. *Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3.* 12:00 PM

October 25 (Wednesday)

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA. *Conference Rooms 2 and 3.* 1:00 PM

Calendar continued on p. 2

MPO Suburban Mobility Program Moving Forward on All Fronts

With the implementation of a new suburban service, awards for funding under the fiscal year (FY) 2006 Suburban Mobility Program, and the request for proposals to provide funding under the FY 2007 program, the Boston Region MPO continues to respond to the desire for more transit services in suburban areas.

NEW SERVICE BEGINS IN METROWEST

The MPO joined the celebration of the liftoff of LIFT 9 at Framingham State College on August 31. The new service is funded under the Boston Region MPO Suburban Mobility Program, using money from the Federal Highway Administration's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program. Framingham State College, Genzyme Corporation, the National Development Corporation, and Natick Mall provided matching funds. The Town of Framingham administers the service.

LIFT 9 serves locations along Route 9 in Framingham and Natick, including Framingham State College, Shoppers World, the Natick Mall, Technology Park, and the 9/90 Corporate Center. A stop at the West Natick commuter rail station provides a connection to the MBTA system.

For more information on LIFT service, go to www.framinghamma.gov or call (508) 532-5459.

LIFT 9 liftoff: left to right, Susan Tordella, MetroWest Transportation Management Association; Dale Hamel, Framingham State College; Jim Cope, Executive Office of Transportation; Barbara Lucas, Metropolitan Area Planning Council and Boston Region MPO Suburban Mobility/Transportation Demand Management Subcommittee Chair; Paul Matthews, I-495 Arc of Innovation; Karen Spilka, State Senator; John Stasik, Framingham Board of Selectmen and MetroWest Growth Management Committee Chair; and Kathleen Bartolini, Town of Framingham.

FY 2006 FUNDING AWARDS

In addition to funding the start-up of Lift 9 service, the MPO also awarded funds that allow suburban services that were begun in the Program's first two years to continue. The Worcester Regional Transit Authority operates The Local Connection, a demand-response service in Marlborough and Southborough that carries area residents to commuter rail, work sites, and other locations in these communities. The Ipswich–Essex Explorer, a seasonal shuttle, carries beachgoers and day-trippers between the Ipswich commuter rail station, town-center destinations in Ipswich, and other attractions in both Ipswich and Essex. The Route 128 Business Council operated a

• Suburban services *cont. on p. 2*

The members of the Boston Region MPO: Executive Office of Transportation, Cities of Boston, Everett, Newton, and Salem, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board, Massachusetts Highway Department, Massachusetts Port Authority, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, Towns of Bedford, Framingham, and Hopkinton

MBTA Seeks Customer Feedback on Improved Train Interiors

Upgraded trains will be rolling on each line of the MBTA subway system this month, and the MBTA wants to hear what the public thinks about them.

On the improved train cars, the black, imitation-leather seat cushions have been replaced with cushions made of a multicolored, wool-like fabric that is woven with thin threads of metal. The material is designed to resist tearing and to be more impervious to graffiti. Each year the MBTA replaces 2,000 or more seats that have been ripped or defaced, at a cost of $18 per cushion.

MBTA's upgraded Orange Line car

Overhead grab handles have also been installed to make it easier for people who have trouble reaching the overhead bars and need support when standing, especially passengers who are elderly or who have a disability.

System maps showing the entire MBTA network have been placed in the cars to allow travelers to better plan their trips across the city. Cars that have not been upgraded contain only maps of a single train line.

"We're doing a makeover," MBTA General Manager Daniel Grabauskas said. "We want to hear from commuters about [the changes]."

Based on the feedback it receives from the public, the MBTA will make decisions on whether to implement the upgrades on additional vehicles.

MPO Sounds Call for 2007 Suburban Mobility Program Proposals

• Suburban Mobility *cont. from p. 1*

shuttle connecting the Anderson Transportation Center with employment and residential destinations in Woburn, Burlington, and Lexington before it discontinued service this summer. The Suburban Mobility/ Transportation Demand Management Subcommittee also approved a proposal submitted by the Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce for a shuttle service between the Route 128 commuter rail station and major employment sites in Norwood and Canton. The service will also provide an intermittent loop to Ashmont Station on the MBTA's Red Line.

SUBREGIONAL INFORMATION SESSIONS SCHEDULED

If there are unmet mobility needs in your area that could be filled by a program similar to those described above, now is the time to take action.

Information about the FY 2007 program will be sent to chambers of commerce, councils on aging, and eligible program participants prior to information sessions that will be held at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's subregional meetings in October and November. These sessions will focus on helping people develop ideas for services that would improve transit options for people to get from their home to a commuter rail station, and to shopping and schools, or services that would improve reverse-commute options in the suburbs. For details on the time and location of these sessions, contact Mark Racicot of MAPC at (617) 451-2770 or at mracicot@mapc.org.

The MPO is soliciting letters of interest from eligible program participants for funding under the FY 2007 program. For this year, $650,000 is programmed in the FYs 2007–2010 Transportation Improvement Program. Eligible entities are the 85 municipalities in the Boston Region MPO that are unserved or underserved by existing transit service, transportation management associations in the MPO region, as well as regional transit authorities and planning agencies that either are in the Boston Region MPO area or abut it.

Letters of interest are due by November 28, and full pro-

• Suburban Mobility *cont. on p. 3*

Calendar cont. from p. 1

October 30 (Monday)

MBTA Rider Oversight Committee. *Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3.* 4:30 P.M

November 2 (Thursday)

Boston Region MPO Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. *Conference Room 4.* 10:00 AM

November 8 (Wednesday)

Executive Office of Transportation. Massachusetts Bicycle Plan Update.* *Conference Rooms 2 and 3.* 6:30 PM

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

October 3 (Tuesday)

Charles River Basin Citizens Advisory Committee. *Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr, St. Clair Room, 31st Floor, 60 State Street, Boston.* 4:00 PM

October 13 (Friday)

Move Massachusetts. Exploring the Possibilities of Regional Rail in the Northeast. *Brown Rudnick Berlack Israels, One Financial Center, 18th Floor, Boston (across from South Station).* 8:10 AM

October 16 (Monday)

Executive Office of Transportation. Green Line Extension Environmental Review. *Somerville High School Auditorium, 81 Highland Avenue, Somerville.* 6:00 PM

October 19 (Thursday)

Executive Office of Transportation. Massachusetts Bicycle Plan Update.* *Concord Town House, Hearing Room, 22 Monument Square, Concord.* 6:30 PM

* For information about the Bicycle Plan Update, go to www.massbikeplan.org.

• Suburban Mobility *cont. from p. 2*

posals are due on February 28, 2007. The MPO is scheduled to award this year's funding in May 2007, with implementation ancitipated in the fall.

The MPO has developed a page on its Web site for this program where information, sample materials, and updates will be available to project proponents and members of the public.

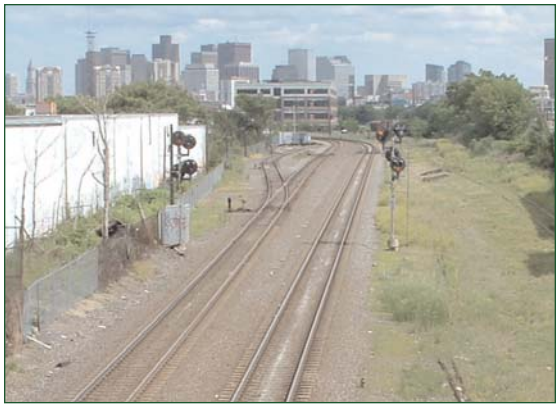
For more information on this MPO program, contact Barbara Lucas, Chair, Suburban Mobility/ Transportation Demand Management Subcommittee at blucas@mapc.org or Jonathan Belcher at jbelcher@ctps.org.

EOT Files Environmental Notification on MBTA Green Line Extension

PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULED

On October 2 the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) filed an Extended Environmental Notification Form with the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) for the proposed Green Line extension project. This phase of the project, which is a commitment under the current State Implementation Plan and is included in the Boston Region MPO's Unified Planning Work Program, calls for conceptual design and engineering, as well as an assessment of the environmental impacts of constructing an extension of the Green Line to Medford and a branch to Union Square in Somerville. Details regarding impacts associated with station sitings, maintenance facility planning, and terminus siting will also be addressed in this phase.

The Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Unit of EOEA's Department of Environmental Protection and EOT have scheduled a public meeting on the project at Somerville High School later this month. See the calendar on 2 page for details.



A portion of the proposed right-of-way for the MBTA Green Line extension to Somerville and Medford

Boston Region MPO Activities

BOSTON REGION MPO ACTION ITEMS

The MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee gave the go-ahead for work to begin on three projects that will be carried out by the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS): Support to the Urban Ring, Phase II, Draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement; 2006–2007 High-Occupancy-Vehicle-Lane Monitoring on I-93 North and the Southeast Expressway; and the I-495 Corridor Study. The Committee also approved *Feasibility Study for a Proposed Extension of the Bruce N. Freeman Memorial Path in Sudbury and Framingham* (for more information about this study or to obtain a copy, contact Cathy Buckley Lewis of CTPS at (617) 973-7100 or cbucklewis@ctps.org).

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

At their September meeting, staff from the Executive Office of Transportation's Office of Transportation Planning gave a presentation to members on federal highway funding earmarks designated by Congress. Also at that meeting, MPO staff gave a final briefing on the MPO-endorsed versions of the fiscal year (FY) 2007 Unified Planning Work Program and FYs 2007–2010 Transportation Improvement Program and Air Quality Conformity Determination.

In addition, Chair Steve Olanoff and Vice Chair Frank DeMasi were unanimously reelected to another one-year term in office.

In October Jim Gallagher, of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, will present the preferred land-use scenario that has been selected for JOURNEY TO 2030, the MPO's long-range transportation plan. See page 1 for details on upcoming Advisory Council and Freight Committee meetings.

ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE MBTA (AACT) UPDATE

John D. Ray, Director of MBTA Railroad Operations, attended the AACT meeting in September to discuss issues affecting commuter rail passengers with disabilities, such as the need for sensitivity training for commuter rail employees, the importance of maintaining a safe path of travel to station platforms and trains, and improving the commuter rail communication systems.

Members have also been working closely with the MBTA, providing feedback on specifications for the next purchase of RIDE vehicles and offering comments on the accessibility features of the new MBTA clean-diesel buses.

See the calendar on page 2 for details on the October AACT meeting and an event celebrating National Disability Awareness Month.

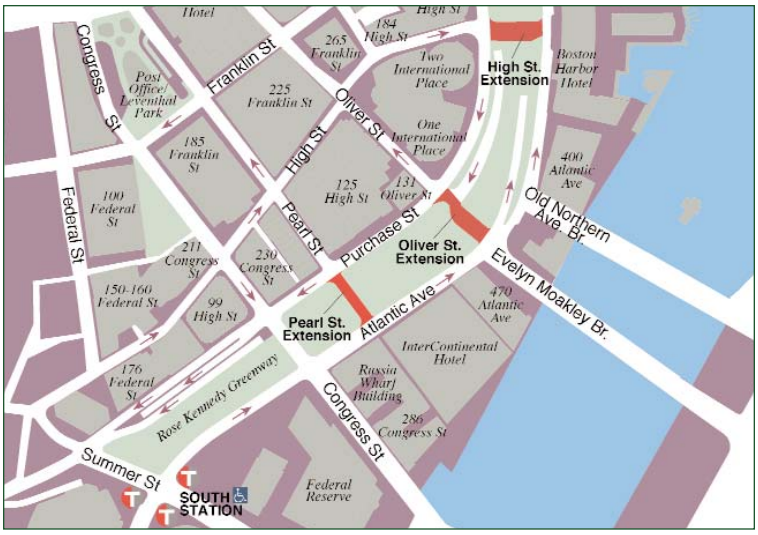
New Street Configurations Improve Financial District Traffic Flow

The extensions of Pearl and Oliver streets in downtown Boston are providing better access to the Financial District and the South Boston Waterfront. The roadway extensions, opened to the public on September 9, knit together sections of Boston that were separated by the former elevated highway.

Pearl Street has been extended from Atlantic Avenue to Purchase Street, providing a new street across the Rose Kennedy Greenway and improving access to the Financial District from the South Boston Waterfront. Motorists wishing to access the Financial District from the Waterfront may now do so via Congress Street, taking a right onto Atlantic Avenue, and then a left onto the Pearl Street extension.

Oliver Street has been extended from the I-93 South, Exit 23 (Purchase Street) off-ramp to the Evelyn Moakley Bridge and Seaport Boulevard. This reestablishes a direct connection from I-93 South to the South Boston Waterfront and eliminates the need to use Congress Street to get from Purchase Street (southbound) to Atlantic Avenue (northbound) to access the Moakley Bridge.

High Street has also seen some changes that improve traffic flow. The direction of vehicular traffic on High Street in the Financial District between Federal and Purchase streets was reversed on September 30. High Street has also been extended across Purchase Street to Atlantic Avenue, and the segment that was formerly bidirectional from Summer Street to Federal Street is now one-way. These changes are intended to create a more grid-like traffic pattern in the area.



Configuration of High, Pearl, and Oliver streets (extensions shown in red)

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